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ADDRESS

OF

MONTGOMERY BLAIR,

BEFORE THE

MARYLAND STATE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION,

AT

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Address of Mr. Blair.

Gentlemen of the Convention :

I appreciate highly the honor you have done me in calling me to preside over this first Republican State Convention which has assembled in Maryland.

I am deeply sensible of the importance of the occasion, and of the great responsibility we have taken upon ourselves in inaugurating a party here which all who have faith in adherence to truth and justice and constitutional obligation, as the sure means of triumph in our political contests, cannot fail to foresee, will soon sway the councils of this Commonwealth and of the nation.

It is a great and holy cause the Republicans have undertaken to sustain. The sacred interests in their care demand of them everywhere prudence, courage, untiring and unselfish effort, but especially in this and other Southern States, where our objects and principles are so grossly misrepresented, and are so imperfectly understood by a large portion of the people, should we, whilst constant to our principles, endeavor to be prudent in our conduct.

The great difficulty with men of spirit, in our position, is the danger of being drawn into extravagance by the extravagance with which we are assailed and opposed. We must guard against this, and disabuse the public mind of its prejudice against the movement with which we are identified, by defining our position in a manner which will put an end to controversy. *The measures* of the Republican party are rapidly accomplishing this. Two of its great measures will be found especially effective for this purpose: *first*, the homestead law, to prevent the Africanization of the Territories, by giving them as homesteads to the free white race; and *second*, the plan of procuring, in some neighboring country, a region where the free people among us of the African race may also, in accordance with the wise and humane counsels of Mr. Jefferson, be given homesteads and a country of their own. These are measures looking to the separation of the free people of these dissimilar races, for the good of both, and they meet the general approval of all good men; and the advocacy of them by the Republican party will silence the false clamor against us, that we maintain the equality of the negro, and favor amalgamation—a falsehood which has proved the most effective instrument to arouse popular prejudice against us, and which was plausible till the Republican party put itself on the Jeffersonian plan of separating the races by these measures. But whilst these measures proclaim that it fosters the policy of the fathers of the Republic, in making the temperate regions of America the chosen home of the white man, and make it pre-eminently the *white man's party*, it must not be allowed to be said that it contemplates any interference with the relation of master and slave.

The time will probably come when emancipation may be effected here and elsewhere, as it has been in Pennsylvania and others of the older States. But with this the Republican party has nothing to do, and the subject is in fact as much beyond the constitutional jurisdiction and actual power of the Federal Government, to which this contest relates, as it is beyond the power and jurisdiction of the British Monarchy. Every one that knows anything knows the truth of this assertion; and yet, it is by confounding the question of power over what are called the *Territories of the United States*—which, by the very terms used in speaking of them, are conceded to *belong to the United States*—with the question of power over the territory of Maryland, (and which the terms used equally demonstrate not to belong to the United States,) that our adversaries endeavor to present us in the attitude of conspiring with external fanaticism to war on the rights of property held by our fellow-citizens. There is nothing in the nature of the controversy, or in your history or mine, to justify such an imputation. We simply hold to the doctrines our Southern forefathers taught us. We are, as they were, identified with the people here by interest, by social relations, and by blood; and in my own case, I think it not inappropriate to say, by blood running back to the foundation of the city and State; for my maternal ancestor, Richard Gist, as you may see in the annals of the city, was the engineer and surveyor who laid it off.

We are not the men, therefore, who are likely to be wanting to the true interests or just rights of the people of Maryland.

But there is still another mode of defining our position, which, in my judgment, we should aim to accomplish, in order effectually to dissipate the prejudice against our party and cause, which exists in the minds of a large number of the true and honest men, not only in this and other slaveholding States, but, to some extent, in the Northern States; that is, by the candidate to be chosen at Chicago. If we can induce our friends at Chicago to give us a man whose career has been passed among Southern people, and has been such as to assure them that a Republican President, whilst resisting every effort to Africanize the Territories, and persistently holding them for the homesteads of free white settlers only, will yet sternly rebuke every external effort to interfere with slavery in the States, the selection of such a candidate will define our position too clearly to be misunderstood by any intelligent and honest man, and will do more for that object throughout the country than any amount of speech-making. And I think we have a man for the occasion, whose name I need not mention, although he has not made himself prominent in politics of late years. Had he done so, he would not have been the man for the occasion; for it might have been thought that he had sought to make himself a candidate, and this would have impaired that absolute confidence in his fidelity which now exists in the State in which he resides, and in other Southern States in which he is known, and which is required to give the Republican party an organization coextensive with the nationality of its principles. His retirement having been voluntary—for he would have been both a Senator and a Cabinet minister since 1850, if he would have consented to accept those stations—he has proved himself exempt from the lust of office, that prevalent vice which so much impairs the confidence of the people in the integrity of public men. It is true that there is no difference in the principles upon which he and the Northern men who will be urged as candidates at Chicago would administer the Government; yet it is nevertheless natural that his own people, and those in the contiguous free States who sympathise with them more or less in their apprehensions, should feel more assured of the safety of their rights, which are supposed to be deeply involved in this contest, when committed to a Southern man, and especially when in the hands of one whose

integrity and strength of character is universally acknowledged.

With respect to the State policy of the Republican party of Maryland, its first mission should be to aid in ridding the State of the rotten-borough system, by which it is made a minority Government, and institute popular sovereignty *here*. I need not remind you of the fact that the Government of this State is not now a popular Government, in the proper sense of the term. The people of this city have recently had a sufficiently convincing reminder of this fact. It may be instructive, however, to analyze briefly, at this time, the organization under which we live. To illustrate its nature, it may be remarked that the county of Calvert, with a white population of only 3,630 souls in 1850, and which has probably not been increased since, has equal power in the State Senate with this great city, which had a white population in 1850 of 140,666, and contains now probably at least 200,000 white people. One white man in Calvert has therefore more power in the Senate of the State than fifty citizens of Baltimore.

In the House of Delegates, the preponderance is not so great; but, even in that body, the voice of one white man in Calvert has more power than ten citizens of Baltimore. Six other counties, with an average white population of 6,000, have the same representation as Calvert, giving each of their citizens a greater power than thirty Baltimoreans in the Senate, and six in the House of Delegates. The other six governing counties have a white population averaging a little over 10,000. So that each of their citizens have a power in the Senate equal to twenty, and in the House of Delegates greater than six, Baltimoreans.

I have, in comparing the power of the southern governing counties with Baltimore city, taken the extreme case; but I may add, that the people of the northern and western counties of the State are also disfranchised, to a degree unknown elsewhere in this country.

Thus, excluding Baltimore city, the eight populous counties of the north and west, which contained, in 1850, a white population of 172,616, which has since greatly increased, have only eight Senators — five less than the thirteen southern counties, which contained in 1850 but 104,661 white people, a number which has probably not been since increased; and in the House of Delegates, these eight populous counties have only the same number of representatives (thirty-two) as the thirteen southern counties. The southern counties owned 58,000 slaves, 37,000 more than were owned in the north; and having the power, they took about one-fourth more of the Senate than they gave the populous counties, and allowed themselves the same representation in the House of Delegates for their excess of 37,000, which they allowed for the 68,000 white people by which the north exceeded the south in that class of population. By this arrangement, they made each of their slaves equivalent nearly to two northern white men in the House of Delegates.*

*NORTHERN AND WESTERN COUNTIES.

	Senators.	Representatives.	Free White population.	Slaves.
Alleghany	1	4	21,633	724
Baltimore city	1	10	140,666	6,718
Balt. county	1	6	34,187	
Carroll	1	3	18,667	875
Cecil	1	3	15,472	844
Frederick	1	6	33,314	3,913
Harford	1	3	14,413	2,166
Howard*	1	2	8,000	4,000
Washington	1	5	26,930	2,090
Total	9	42	313,282	21,330

SOUTHERN COUNTIES.

Anne Arundel	1	3	8,542	7,249
Calvert	1	2	3,630	4,486
Caroline	1	2	6,096	808
Charles	1	2	5,665	9,584
Dorchester	1	3	10,747	4,282
Kent	1	2	5,616	2,627
Montgomery	1	2	9,435	5,114
Prince George	1	3	8,901	11,510
Queen Anne's	1	2	6,936	4,270
St. Mary's	1	2	6,223	5,842
Somerset	1	4	13,385	5,588
Talbot	1	2	7,084	4,134
Worcester	1	3	12,401	3,444
Total	13	32	104,661	58,940

*New county, taken from Anne Arundel. Population estimated.

Having reduced the Governor to a cipher, giving him no veto or Legislative power or appointments, they then, as if in mockery of popular sovereignty, gave the election of Governor to the people, presenting them, as it were, with a tin sword!

This discrimination against white population was sufficiently unjust at the time, but it has been since greatly aggravated by the growth of that population.

The ostensible ground upon which this gross disfranchisement of the white people of the State was imposed was, that it was deemed necessary to protect slave property. It was urged in vain, in the debates in the Constitutional Convention of 1851, that the purpose did not justify the usurpation, and that it was not necessary for the purpose, for there was no instance in history where the people, having the power of government, had abused it to sacrifice individual rights.

All remonstrance and argument was unheeded, and secession from the State was formally threatened by the minority, if they were not allowed to maintain their power over it, just as we have seen the General Government menaced with disruption, if the same interest was not permitted to hold possession of it.

As it is not the purpose of the Republican party to use the General Government for the purpose of despoiling slaveholders of their property, so it is not our purpose, as Maryland Republicans, to use the power of the State for any such purpose. We hold that slavery is an evil, and that the time will come when emancipation will gradually take place. But this can honestly be done only by the consent of the masters, or by making them just compensation. But this is not, at present, the question. The public mind in Maryland is not now ripe for emancipation, and no scheme for it has been proposed or discussed. The struggle in Maryland, as in the United States, is manifestly not for the *preservation* of this property, but for political supremacy; and the property interest in negroes, and the prejudices implanted in the minds of others by the existence of slavery in their midst, are adroitly used by a political party, to hold possession of the Government.

Whether the owners of this species of property—who, for the most part, have little share in the political power obtained by the party which officiously makes itself the special champion of their rights—will continue passively to suffer their property interests to be staked in the contest, and antagonized against popular government, remains to be seen. They incur dangers from two different quarters by this course. *First*, from the people, who will in that case certainly come to regard slaveholding as inconsistent with popular government; and *second*, from their special champions, who will destroy the value of their property by reopening the slave trade. They already perceive that, in order to give the system the expansion requisite to make it a permanent basis of political power, this trade must be reopened; and, accordingly, it has been already practically legalized by the decisions of two of their courts.* Slaveholders have therefore no ground for hostility to the Republican party, and no class of our citizens are in fact more interested in the overthrow of the filibustering Democracy, which so trifles with their rights of property.

I have thus endeavored to present, briefly and with candor, the distinguishing features of the Republican policy. In my judgment, it proposes no war upon any class of our citizens, or upon any section of our country. If it did, no earthly inducement could engage me in it. It seems to me to be but the old, comprehensive, and beneficent philosophy of the fathers of our institutions, under which we acquired our greatness and good name among the nations of the

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* It is not pretended, indeed, that the expansion of slavery, for which this contest is made, is required for the safety or value of the *property interest* in slaves. Mr. Hammond, of South Carolina, recently stated in the Senate that the domain within the United States now subject to slavery would sustain 200,000,000 slaves. No slave-owner could want a larger field, on account of his property in slaves.

earth, and preserved tranquillity among our sisterhood of States for more than sixty years. Our internal troubles and present ill repute among our neighbors are due altogether to the adoption, within the last twelve years, of the new and dangerous theories propounded by Mr. Calhoun. When first broached in the Senate, they were denounced as "firebrands" by the sagacious Benton; and his denunciation was approved by every wise and conservative member of that body, and almost universally by the people.

The present condition of the country still better attests the justice with which the old patriot characterized the mischievous inventions of the nullifier. Fortunately, the country is rapidly returning to the primitive republican faith, by which the Government has been guided smoothly and prosperously under all circumstances. Let all who would restore harmony embrace it. It was the creed of all parties within twelve years; and the years of trouble which have followed its abandonment by our rulers have vindicated its truth even better than the previous generations of prosperity under it. Even our adversaries feel that some change is demanded by the evils of the times. Will a man of sense and a patriot suffer himself to be deterred from uniting with us, under such circumstances, to bring about this change, by the slang phrases with which we are assailed? I cannot believe it. The Republican party alone gives promise of being able to effect this change. It embodies already the great mass of the opposition to the acknowledged misrule which disturbs and endangers the Government. It is composed, for the most part, of that rural population to which Mr. Jefferson looked with confidence for the safety of our institutions, being the purest and most unselfish portion of the people. It is always safe to co-operate with such peeple. I believe, therefore, that we may confidently expect the co-operation of the people of Maryland in restoring the ship of state to the Republican tack, if a proper man is selected for the helm.

The sentiments of the above address were well received by the Convention and by a large audience, and the following resolutions covering the grounds taken in it, which Mr. Washington Bonifant, from Montgomery, and formerly a Representative from that county in the General Assembly, intended to present, would have been adopted, but that the deliberations of the Convention were interrupted for some time by a few disorderly persons. When order was restored, the Convention adjourned, to enable the committee appointed to select delegates to consult. On reassembling, little save the formal business could be attended to, as the delegates from the country were anxious to take the evening trains for their homes.

We pledge our allegiance to the principles inscribed on the face of the Constitution by the founders of the Republic in relation to slavery, which then as now afflicts the country. We cherish in our hearts the compromises they then made to create the Union, as the means of preserving it, and leave to the slaveholders and slaveholding States all the legislation necessary for the final disposition of this subject, which was surrendered to their jurisdiction.

2d. We oppose amalgamation of the white and black races on this continent, which has been suggested as a natural mode of gradual extinction of slavery, by blending the color and the capacities of the two races. Hybrids of all sorts are failures, and a hybrid Government would be the worst of all.

3d. We are opposed to free negro equality, as having a tendency towards amalgamation.

4th. We acquiesce in the legislation of Maryland which forbids emancipation without the removal of the freedmen, holding the mingling of the free of the colored race with the slaves as threatening, in the fullness of the growth of such population, fatal consequences to the white race.

5th. We hold, however, that the owners of slaves have the right to rid themselves of slavery whenever they feel that it may become oppressive to themselves, as well as to the slaves, and their neighbors who are not slave-owners, in accordance with the law providing for that object, or laws which may hereafter be made by the slaveholding States.

6th. We hold that this manumission brings with it the duty on the part of the States which expel the freedmen, or the States that receive them, or on the United States, as a *dernier resort*, of providing homes for the exiled race, in some suitable region, under the protection and patronage of the country in which they were born, for their own and its benefit.

7th. We are in favor of perfect equality of political rights among the white race, founded on the principle of free, equal, and universal

suffrage, and abjure that system of legislation, in any of the States, which, by basing representation upon an enumeration of the negroes, destroys the equality among white men in different sections of the State, in proportion as the negro population preponderates in one section.

8th. We are therefore in favor of a revision of the Constitution of Maryland, to restore their political rights to the great majority of the white citizens of the State who have been disfranchised; a small minority in that section of the State where the negro population is most numerous, wielding its political power, in contravention of that plain republican principle, that a majority shall govern.

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